DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 022 CE 060 682

AUTHOR	Bernhardt, Stephen A., Comp.; Meyer, Paul R., Comp.
TITLE	Step Ahead: A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication.
INSTITUTION	New Mexico State Univ., Las Cruces.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	91
CONTRACT	V198A00163
NOTE	62p.; For related documents, see CE 060 683-686.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; *Allied Health Occupations; Basic Skills; *Communication Skills; Educational Cooperation; English (Second Language); *Hospital Personnel; Hospitals; Illiteracy; Institutional Cooperation; *Literacy Education; Needs Assessment; Patients; Peer Teaching; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Reading Skills; Staff Development; Tutoring; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*Workplace Literacy

ABSTRACT

This publication consists of materials produced by Step Ahead, a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project--a partnership between New Mexico State University and Memorial Medical Center, Las Cruces, New Mexico. The project abstract is a one-page summary of facts, objectives, and procedures related to this project, which provided onsite instruction at Memorial Medical Center in job-specific literacy and improved intrahospital and hospital-patient communication by revising hard-to-read documentation. The final performance report (February 1992) presents these results: 238 hospital staff attended 1,556 hours of instruction, and the project offered short courses, English skills workshops, and individual assistance and tutoring. A needs assessment (October 1990) describes information collection activities to identify needs and define program goals concerning staff and staff/patient communications at Memorial Medical Center. It proposes courses, documentation projects, liaison relationships, and intervention activities. Three progress reports (December 1990, April 1991, and August 1991) detail ongoing evaluation and commentary on the project. The final performance report and the progress reports also contain attachments that include attendance figures, ethnic participation, evaluations, and an article on the Medical Spanish courses offered. (YLB)

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Step Ahead: A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

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New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, NM

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Step Ahead: A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

U.S. Department of Education: FY 1990 National Workplace Literacy Program
New Mexico State University & Memorial Medical Center

PROJECT DIRECTORS	Stephen A. Bernhardt & Paul R. Meyer Department of English, Box 3E New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003 (505) 646-2027; 646-1418
COOOPERATING AGENCIES	US Department of Education, NM Coalition for Literacy, New Mexico State University, Memorial Medical Center
AWARD PERIOD:	May 15, 1990 - November 15, 1991
PROJECT OFFICERS:	Nancy Smith Brooks, DNP, (202) 732-2269 & Sarah Newcomb, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, (202) 732-2390.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide on-site instruction at Memorial Medical Center in job-specific literacies necessary for satisfactory job performance.
2. To offer basic literacy instruction to hospital staff who read and write at marginal levels and in the process to enhance their lives through access to the world of print.
3. To improve the quality of intra-hospital and hospital-patient communication by revising documentation that is difficult to read or work with.

PROCEDURES:

Hospital staff at a variety of skill levels will be encouraged to participate with release time in modular, job-specific courses in literacy and communication skills. Such courses will include writing memos, short reports and incident reports; reading and writing personnel evaluations; oral communication; and problem solving. Staff with more basic needs will receive one-on-one tutoring with literacy volunteers and will be encouraged to enroll in ABE and ESL programs. Internal hospital documentation and hospital-patient materials will be made more accessible to readers at a variety of skill levels.

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS: Adult basic, adult, ESL, postsecondary.

TARGET POPULATION: Undereducated, minorities, limited English proficient.

PLANNED NUMBER OF TRAINEES: 250-300.

PLANNED SECOND ROUND FUNDED PROGRAM (May 1992-November 1993)

Components:	• Short courses in reading, writing, speaking, supervising, presenting • Employee-to-employee literacy tutoring within hospitals • Development of organizational climate that supports literacy
Participating Hospitals	Presbyterian Hospitals (Albuquerque, Artesia, Clovis, Springer, Tucumcari, Española, Ruidoso, Lovington, Socorro), Memorial, Lovelace, St. Joseph's, UNM, Carlsbad, Deming, Farmington, Gallup, Roswell Silver City

Final Report:
Step *Ahead*:
A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

Compiled by Stephen A. Bernhardt and Paul R. Meyer
as part of the
Workplace Literacy Partnership

Las Cruces, NM
February 15, 1992

This final report details the period May 15, 1990-February 15, 1992 for Step *Ahead*, a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project (Project #V198A00163), a partnership between the English Department of New Mexico State University and Memorial Medical Center.

Progress in Meeting Project Goals

Participation Goals

We exceeded our goals for participation in short courses that focus on literacy skills necessary for successful job performance and advancement. The data reflect broad participation by working groups across the hospital. In all, 238 of the hospital staff attended 1556 hours of instruction. See Attachment #1.

We also made progress in establishing one-to-one literacy tutoring at the hospital site. We completed three cycles of our English Skills Workshop--which addressed the basic literacy of needs of hospital employees in a small group setting. The Workshop is now an ongoing function of their Educational Services Department and will continue after the grant expires. The workshops will be run on cycles of six to eight weeks. At any one time, between two and six individuals are benefitting from the small group approach to literacy tutoring at MMC. The tutoring is also open to individuals from the community who feel they might benefit from the small group setting.

The presence of our project also directly resulted in other sorts of literacy activities within the hospital. Though not strictly a part of grant funding, the project helped bring two sections of Spanish for Health Care Workers, and two sections of Advanced Technical and Professional Writing to the hospital's Education Center. These courses will continue to be taught on-site after the project. Approximately 60 staff have benefitted from these courses.

We worked individually with a number of hospital staff on a variety of needs. Approximately 50 staff members at MMC benefitted from individual help within specific job contexts. These are detailed below.

Support from Memorial Medical Center has been great over the course of the project. Attachment 1 estimates MMC's total match (approximately $ 58 ,266) for the period of the grant. This includes paid released time for all class participation, instructional space,

administrative support, and meals or snacks at all classes. This figure should be compared with our original estimate of $22,500 in hospital contribution. The English Department at NMSU also exceeded their original matching commitment by assigning additional graduate assistants to the project ($9,000 worth of GA time over promised amount).

Project Activities

Short Courses

During the grant, we offered multiple sections of courses in oral communication (Straight Talk), writing (Write Stuff), Communication for Supervisors (2 sections), Writing Incident Reports (2 sections), and Making Effective Presentations (1 section).

Write Stuff and Straight Talk met twice per week for an hour and a half for four weeks. Communication for Supervisors and Making Effective Presentations were two-week, four-session courses, and Writing Incident Reports was a one-week, two-session course. All class time was on the clock; and refreshments were provided by the hospital at each meeting. We will continue to offer short courses after the grant period because of demand from hospital departments. The hospital will pay directly for the courses. Four sections of Straight Talk are now being offered to staff in Ambulance and Respiratory Therapy.

Our courses have been well attended and highly praised. We saw a cross section of hospital employees, including supervisors and managers as well as staff. Over half of the participants are from minority groups (See Attachment 3).

We have noticed that our attendance figures have dropped off over the course of the grant. We believe that initially the more aggressive, self-motivated employees volunteered for the instruction, while later in the grant period, we have been seeing people who are less sure of themselves. We continued to work with managers and staff to find ways to offer courses at appropriate times.

English Skills Workshop

The English Skills Workshop continues to meet two days a week for two hours. The workshop provides workers with individualized learning programs and basic instruction in reading and English skills. The workshop is run by a volunteer from the local LVA chapter under a cooperative arrangement with our supporting organization, the Dona Ana Branch Community College.

The workshop is held during working hours and employees get released time to attend. Interest in the workshop is high. Most participants have been from laundry and housekeeping. We had good participation in the first weeks of the workshop, followed by a drop-off due in part to scheduling difficulties. The attendance has fallen off recently. The hospital is, however, very interested in keeping this option open to its employees and will continue to provide space for small group literacy instruction. They will continue to encourage staff to take advantage of the tutoring and encourage others from the community to meet with the small group of hospital employees.

Individual Assistance and Tutoring

We worked with many staff at MMC on specific projects. We simply became a part of working groups within the hospital because of our presence. In each situation, we worked with staff members to solve communication problems, develop better documents, and develop the workplace in ways that support strong literacy across all levels of staff. Specific projects included:

- Developing documentation for new computer systems in the lab

- Helping a supervisor with performance evaluations
- Working one-on-one with various individuals on writing tasks they were having trouble with
- Developing brochures for Ambulatory Surgery to describe services and procedures, in Spanish and English
- Working with the Safety Committee on developing forms and procedures for yearly departmental reports
- Developing complex forms for Respiratory Therapy
- Developing strong training courses for new methods of keeping nursing notes
- Working with Risk Management on developing training courses for staff on reporting unusual incidents
- Working with the Lab to rewrite procedures in English and Spanish for common procedures, including collecting specimens, being tested for AIDS, and other procedural and consent forms
- Helping employees understand and respond to negative performance evaluations.

In each case, we worked to leave behind skilled individuals who could address difficult problems with a strong understanding of written and spoken communication.

Associated Activities

Step *Ahead* helped bring other needed courses on site at the hospital: *Spanish for Healthcare Personnel* and *Advanced Technical and Professional Communication.* Both courses are popular and warmly received. Both will continue to be offered on-site after the grant expires.

Spanish for Healthcare Personnel was offered at the hospital in the Spring. While it was not strictly a **Step *Ahead*** activity--no **Step *Ahead*** funds or staff were involved--**Step *Ahead*** identified the need for the course and arranged for it to be brought to the hospital.

Advanced Technical and Professional Communication is a required course for nurses working toward four-year college degrees. **Step *Ahead*** arranged for the course to be offered at the hospital at a time convenient for many working nurses. It is being rescheduled this spring at the request of nurses and professional staff who feel strongly that the course was valuable.

Because of our involvement in workplace literacy, we have become participants in wider literacy efforts at other hospitals in New Mexico, we have consulted and evaluated other workplace literacy projects, we have become participants in literacy efforts across the State, and we have become part of national efforts among English Educators to promote literacy efforts.

Second Round of Funding

In mid July, we submitted an application to the U. S. Department of Education for a second workplace literacy partnership grant to allow us to continue the work we are doing with Memorial Medical Center and to allow us to bring our materials and establish literacy workshops in seventeen other hospitals around the state of New Mexico.

Publicity

During the project, **Step *Ahead*** received both regional and national attention. The project was described in the *BCEL Newsletter*, and *California Hospitals* ran a story which described **Step *Ahead*** and the national workplace literacy program sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education. Newspapers in El Paso and Las Cruces have also run articles featuring the project. The highlight of the period, though, was the attention the program received as a featured program in ABC's PLUS Literacy series.

Project Literacy U. S.

On March 14 and 15, 1991, a production crew from ABC-TV came to Las Cruces and filmed a promotional spot for its PLUS Literacy Series. The spot featured participants in the **Step *Ahead*** program and focused on the special need for good literacy and communication skills in hospital settings.

The 30-second and 60-second public service announcements that resulted aired nationwide in April and May. The spots were superb. They were professionally produced and targeted to the need for literacy in health-care settings. ABC aired the spots at a variety of times and on dozens of occasions. We thank ABC for its commitment to workplace literacy.

Project Evaluation

We are attaching our three Progress Reports, each of which details on-going evaluation and commentary on the project.

As part of our on-going assessment of the project, Susie Sonflieth, the Director of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy, conducted an independent evaluation of our project (See Attachment 4).

Using independent evaluators (graduate students from another professor's class in Writing Evaluation), we had a full qualitative assessment conducted of our Write Stuff course. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Their 70-page report is summarized in Attachment 5.

Dissemination

This report will be filed with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education and with the Curriculum Coordination Center Network in Oklahoma.

Bernhardt and Meyer continue to write and speak on issues of workplace literacy at regional and national conferences. They are working on articles for a number of journals and magazines to promote workplace literacy. They are working together on a book proposal on Workplace Literacy and the Teaching of English for the National Council of Teachers of English.

Key Personnel

There were no changes in Key Personnel.

Attachment #1: Final Figures

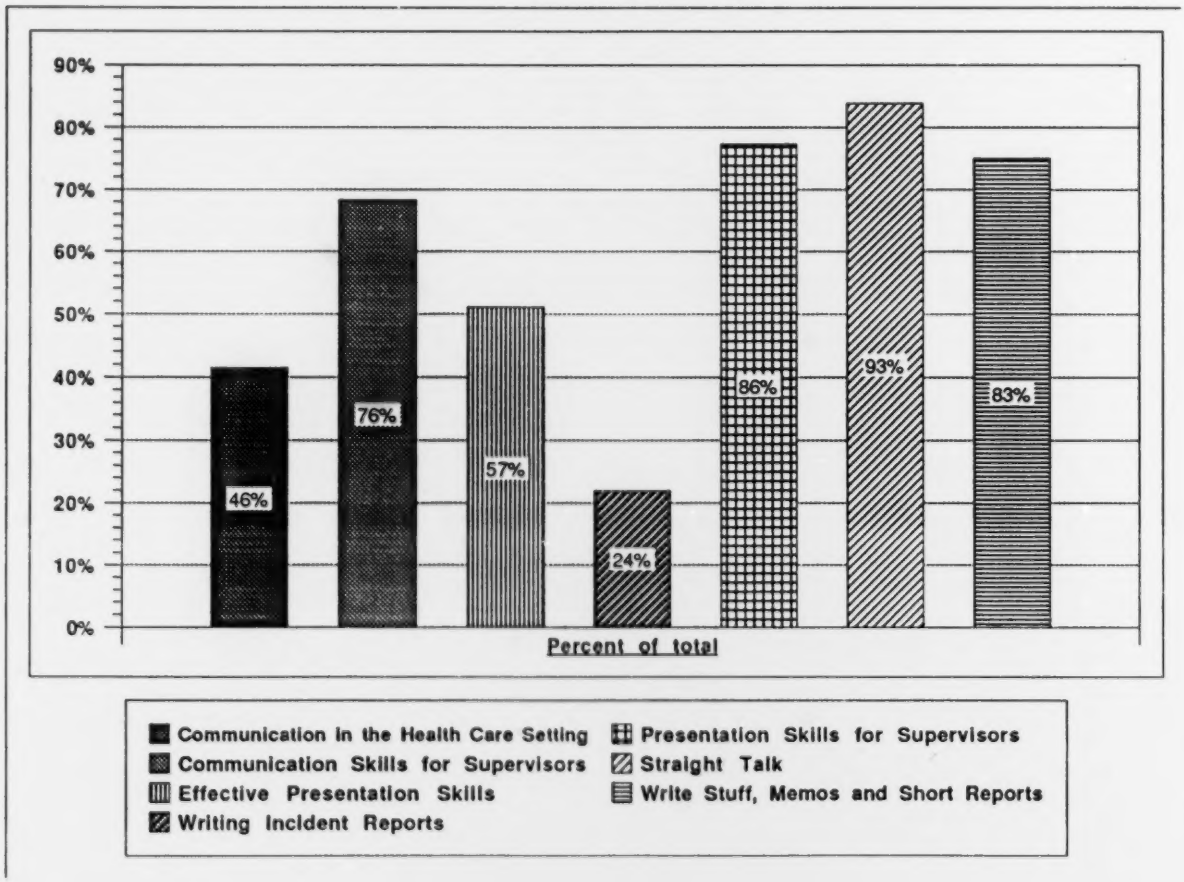
STEP AHEAD PROJECT - FINAL FIGURES

Total Attendance	238
Total Hours Available	2250
Actual Hours Recieved	1556
Overall Percentage of Hours Attended	70%
Average Percentage of Hours Attended	60%
Monetary Contribution From MMC	$58,266.20

Attachment #2: Cumulative Figures

Step Ahead - Class Cumulative Figures

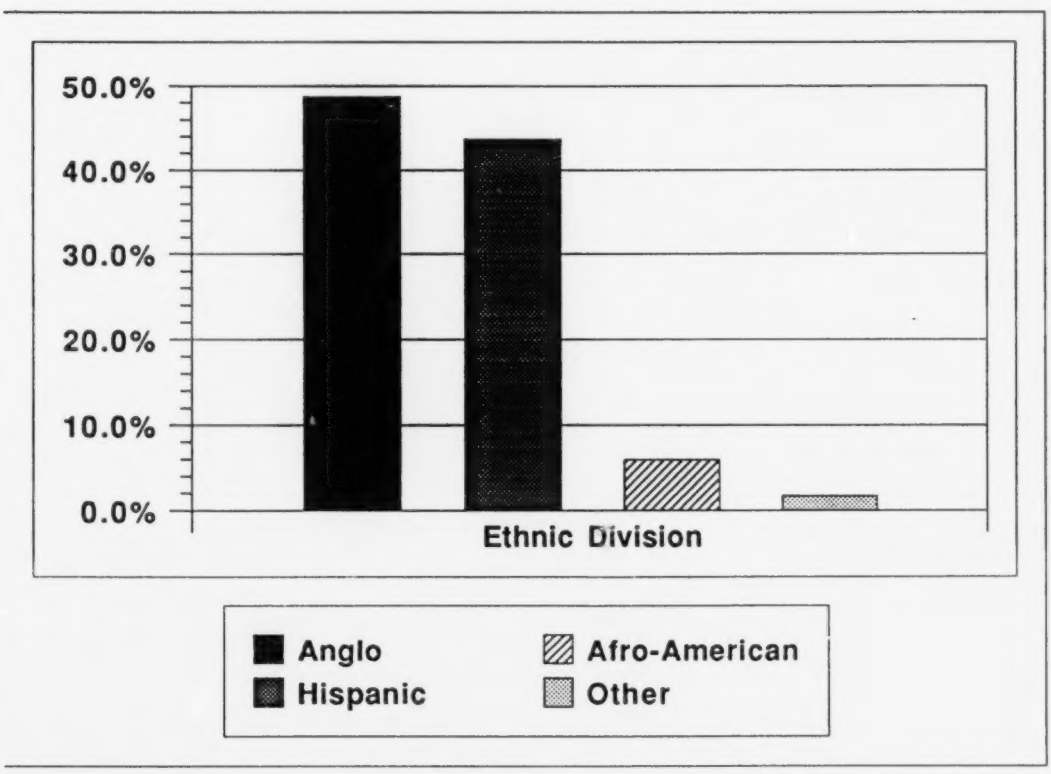
Class	Enrolled	Hours Available	Hours Attended	Percent of total
Communication in the Health Care Setting	18	192	79.5	41%
Communication Skills for Supervisors	52	468	319.5	68%
Effective Presentation Skills	9	67.5	34.5	51%
Writing Incident Reports	23	144	31.5	22%
Presentation Skills for Supervisors	22	176	136	77%
Straight Talk	68	718.5	602.75	84%
Write Stuff, Memos and Short Reports	46	484	363	75%
Totals	238.00	2250.00	1566.75	70%



Attachment #3: Ethnic Participation

Step Ahead - Ethnic Division Cumulative

Ethnic Division	Total	% of Total
Anglo	116	48.7%
Hispanic	104	43.7%
Afro-American	14	5.9%
Other	4	1.7%
Total	238	100.0%



Attachment #4: Evaluation Report of Susie Sonflieth

NEW MEXICO COALITION FOR LITERACY

To: Ms. Nancy Smith Brooks, Program Officer
National Workplace Literacy Program
From: Susie Sonflieth, Executive Director
New Mexico Coalition for Literacy
Date: May 30, 1991
Re: On-site evaluation - Project Step Ahead, Las Cruces, NM;
Conducted April 10-11, 1991

The following evaluation of the Project Step Ahead workplace literacy project includes comments, suggestions and observations made during my two day site visit to the project in April, 1991. I appreciate the comprehensive itinerary afforded to me during my visit to Memorial Medical Center, the project site.

My comments address the selection criteria outlined in the DOE Project Application for workplace literacy projects.

(a) Program Factors

This project demonstrates a strong relationship between the skills taught and the identified needs of participants in relation to the skills development needed to meet particular job requirements in the hospital setting. It is evident from the well developed curriculum that considerable effort went into producing the student materials for the modular classes. Incorporating real hospital situations and examples in the materials makes the classes intimately work related. In one final class session I attended, during which students were asked what they had liked most about the class, the students' overwhelming response was that the materials revolved around real work situations and the examples used were situations they had encountered. Both the printed materials and the instructors demonstrated a good understanding of the hospital as a workplace with special demands on the employee.

The 'community building' process in the classes was most impressive. Students are able to share their insight into and any frustrations arising from their department's operations. Interaction between various levels and types of employees is made possible and employees are able to help each other in the classroom exercises. This new interaction among employees promotes improved productivity and individual job satisfaction, an outcome initially unanticipated by project and hospital staff who now acknowledge the importance of this 'community building and learning process'.

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All partners to the project have demonstrated strong support for project development, especially in providing the flexibility to meet student needs and staff training requests. For example, in response to staff identified needs the project began to offer Spanish classes for English speaking hospital staff as well as a class on how to organize and make presentations.

An under utilized support service offered by the project was compensation for child care services during non-working hours. This should be studied and perhaps offered to the employees in a different way as this was identified as both a motivational tool and a service needed by employees.

(b) Extent of Need for the Project

A computerized tracking system was designed by the hospital for each student. This will give baseline information as well as progress updates and results such as promotion or the attainment of further education outside the program. My observation and review of the makeup of the classes by ethnicity and gender indicated that the project was on target with respect to projections of the population to be served.

(c) Quality of Training

The curriculum materials were well designed and reflected the needs of the workplace. Individual needs were identified and addressed for lower skilled workers and those for whom English is a second language through small group tutoring sessions and one to one tutoring. The hospital classrooms were pleasant and conducive to adult learning. The incentive of serving refreshments and/or lunch is a nice perquisite and helped to create a relaxed atmosphere. I felt the team teaching approach employed in the classes was an excellent means of enhancing interaction between teachers and students and among the students themselves.

(d) Plan of Operation

The original plan of action anticipated most scenarios which arose during the project period. Flexibility was an important component of the plan and the creation of the English Skills Workshop using small group tutoring methods is a successful example.

The one unanticipated weakness of the project was the referral of students who required more intensive one to one tutoring to the local community college across town. Either the students did not feel comfortable going to the campus, or lost interest after they

left the workplace. My suggestion is to incorporate an on-site peer to peer tutoring program in the hospital project. The administration will offer volunteer tutors time off for their participation, suggesting that this approach would be successful. If the local program cannot provide a tutor training session on-site, the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy will underwrite a training session by a certified tutor trainer as part of the Coalition's in-kind support for the project.

(e) Quality of Key Personnel

Both Bernhardt and Meyer have demonstrated excellent skills in the planning and execution of this project. The hospital education and administrative staff have shown great support and interest in the project and its measurable outcomes. The classroom instructors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and showed genuine interest in the students as individuals.

(f) Evaluation Plan

I observed a first and last meeting of the modular classes. Students were asked in both classes to complete a needs assessment survey relative to what they wanted from the class, and whether or not they got what they needed. Responses were informative for class planning and the students expressed positive remarks about the classes meeting their needs.

(g) Budget and Cost Effectiveness

During my visit I was mainly concerned with the Project expenditures tied to the sub-grant awarded by the Coalition for Literacy. There was an underexpenditure of the sub-grant due mainly to a delay in the sub-grant award process and the lack of participation in the one to one tutoring program. Budget revisions were made to satisfy sub-grant requirements.

Project Step Ahead is a successful project and what we have learned from it may be applied to hospitals across our state in designing effective workplace literacy programs. I look forward to the expansion of this project to other communities.

cc: Dr. Stephen Bernhardt, Project Step Ahead

Attachment #5: Summary of Writing Course Evaluation

Julie Ham and Sylvia Achione-Noel

This report assesses the writing course in the Step Ahead program, The Write Stuff. The course focused on memo and short report writing. Overwhelmingly, participants indicate that the course was effective in changing their writing strategies.

METHOD

In face-to-face scripted interviews, participants in The Write Stuff commented on the effectiveness of the course. Effectiveness is defined as participant awareness of his/her own changes in writing strategies and his/her consideration of audience awareness, task, purpose, and situation when writing.

The sample population was chosen to represent the widest range of departments as possible. Fourteen of twenty -three departments were represented in the assessment. (The nine departments not represented had fewer than four hours of participation in the twelve hour course.) Of the twenty -one interview respondents, there were seven chosen specifically because they had completed the course within one week of the assessment interview. The remainder had taken the course within one year of the interview. Eleven supervisory level and ten non -supervisory level participants were interviewed.

RESULTS

Success of programming is often reflected in the achievement of personal goals set by participants. Twenty of twenty -one participants felt that their goals had been achieved or were in the process of being achieved. Goals included "to be more comfortable with writing," "to write better," "be more efficient and faster," "to make my writing more clear," and "more confident." Participant feelings about writing indicated reflected goals as well: "I feel more credible," "I enjoy it (writing) better," "I'm more confident," "I'm writing more on my own," "I'm more comfortable, productive," "I used to hate writing."

Changes in strategies were indicated by a Likert scale ranking question and an open -ended comment question. The ranked question had extremes of "moderately better" and "moderately worse." Seventeen responses were "moderately better," three responses were "better" and one did not respond to the scale. Comments that accompanied this scale included "More than moderately changed," and "much better."

The interview ended with an open-ended question about The Write Stuff. Comments were universally positive. "...it works if you apply it." "I enjoyed it." "It really motivated me to take more (courses)." "I would take it again." "Instructors were pleasant and tactful. I liked interaction in groups." "It was excellent." "I personally found it valuable." "Most everybody hated it [writing]...I think they (the instructors) really turn around our attitudes." "I recommend it." "I think it was useful."

Overall, participants in The Write Stuff course enjoyed the course materials and the instructors. They enjoyed working in small groups and interacting with others outside their own departments. Many said they recommend the course to others. Supervisors said they encourage their employees to take it.

Progress Report:
Step *Ahead*:
A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

Compiled by Stephen A. Bernhardt and Paul R. Meyer
as part of the
Workplace Literacy Partnership

Las Cruces, NM
August 31, 1991

This progress report details the period April 1-August 31 for Step *Ahead*, a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project (Project #V198A00163), a partnership between the English Department of New Mexico State University and Memorial Medical Center. It also serves as our final report for funding partner, The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy.

Progress in Meeting Project Goals

Participation Goals

We are on target for our goals for participation in short courses that focus on literacy skills necessary for successful job performance and advancement. The data reflects broad participation by working groups across the hospital. To date, 226 of the hospital staff have attended 1699 hours of instruction. See below and Attachment #1. It appears that we will easily exceed the participation goals set for the project in our amended goals statement of March, 1990.

We have made progress in establishing one-to-one literacy tutoring at the hospital site. We recently completed the second cycle of our English Skills Workshop--which tries to address the basic literacy of needs of hospital employees in a small group setting. A third workshop cylce will begin soon. Memorial Medical Center plans to make the English Skills Workshop an ongoing function of their Educational Services Department. It will continue after the current grant expires. The workshops will be run on cycles of six to eight weeks with small breaks between cycles. If demand continues to be high, two workshops may be run concurrently.

Support from Memorial Medical Center has been great over the course of the project. Attachment #2 shows MMC's matching contribution for the period from January 1 to June 31, 1991. Attachment #3 is an estimate of MMC's total match (approximately $30,000) for the period from grant inception through June 31, 1991.

Project Activities

Short Courses

During the period April 1 to July 31, we offered four sections of our basic courses--one section of Write Stuff and two of Straight Talk. We also offered three new courses: Communication for Supervisors (2 sections), Writing Incident Reports (2 sections), and Making Effective Presentations (1 section).

Write Stuff and Straight Talk meet twice per week for an hour and a half for four weeks. Communication for Supervisors and Making Effective Presentations are two-week, four-session courses, and Writing Incident Reports is a one-week, two-session course. All class time is on the clock; and refreshments are provided by the hospital at each meeting. We will continue to offer short courses through the end of 1991.

As part of our formative assessment, we have been evaluating and revising the courses as we offer them. Our courses continue to be well attended and highly praised. We are seeing a cross section of hospital employees, including some supervisors and managers as well as staff.

English Skills Workshop

The second cycle of our English Skills Workshop met during July and August. Eight employees participated. The workshop met two days a week for two hours. The workshop provided workers with individualized learning programs and basic instruction in reading and English skills. In this second cycle, the workshop was run by a volunteer from the local LVA chapter under a cooperative arrangement with our supporting organization, the Dona AnaBranch Community College.

The workshop is held during working hours and employees get released time to attend. Interest in the workshop is high. Most participants have been from laundry and housekeeping. We had good participation in the first weeks of the workshop, followed by a drop-off due in part to scheduling difficulties. One of the goals of the next workshop cycle is to establish better working relations with the managers of involved departments.

Associated Activities

During this report period, Step *Ahead* helped bring two needed courses on site at the hospital: *Spanish for Healthcare Personnel* and *Advanced Technical and Professional Communication*. Both courses were popular and warmly received.

Spanish for Healthcare Personnel was offered at the hospital in the Spring. While it was not strictly a Step *Ahead* activity--no Step *Ahead* funds or staff were involved--Step *Ahead* identified the need for the course and arranged for it to be brought to the hospital. Attachment #4 is an evaluation and assessment of the course.

Advanced Technical and Professional Communication is a required course for nurses working toward four-year college degrees. Step *Ahead* arranged for the course to be offered at the hospital at a time convenient for many working nurses. It is being rescheduled for next spring at the request of nurses and professional staff who feel strongly that the course was valuable.

Second Round of Funding

In mid July, we submitted an application to the U. S. Department of Education for a second workplace literacy partnership grant to allow us to continue the work we are doing with Memorial Medical Center and to allow us to bring our materials and establish literacy workshops in seventeen other hospitals around the state of New Mexico.

Publicity

During the report period, Step ***Ahead*** received both regional and national attention. The project was described in the *BCEL Newsletter*, and *California Hospitals* ran a story which described Step ***Ahead*** and the national workplace literacy program sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education (Attachment #5). Newspapers in El Paso and Las Cruces have also run articles featuring the project. The highlight of the period, though, was the attention the program received as a featured program in ABC's PLUS Literacy series.

Project Literacy U. S.

On March 14 and 15, 1991, a production crew from ABC-TV came to Las Cruces and filmed a promotional spot for its PLUS Literacy Series. The spot featured participants in the Step ***Ahead*** program and focused on the special need for good literacy and communication skills in hospital settings.

The 30-second and 60-second public service announcements that resulted aired nationwide in April and May. The spots were superb. They were professionally produced and targetted to the need for literacy in health-care settings. ABC aired the spots at a variety of times and on dozens of occasions. We thank ABC for its commitment to workplace literacy.

Activities Being Planned

We recently received an extension on the grant that will take us till February 15, 1992. We are in good shape to continue until that time with our current budget. We plan to continuing offering short courses and conducting literacy workshops at MMC through December, 1991. During this time we will also be engaged in some transitional activities to make it possible for MMC to continue offering Step ***Ahead*** courses after the termination of the grant.

We intend to begin winding down the project in December and to write up our final report by the end of February, 1992. At the same time, we are also helping other hospitals around the state establish new workplace literacy programs.

Project Evaluation

As part of our on-going assessment of the project, Susie Sonflieth, the Director of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy, conducted an independent evaluation of our project (See Attachment #6).

Many current activities are concerned with our own final project evaluation. We are collecting data for our final report, we are preparing a follow-up survey of program participants, and we are planning an in-depth follow up with a couple of working groups at the hospital that were major participants in the project. The follow-up evaluation will include structured interviews and focus groups.

In addition, Meyer and Bernhardt will be attending the national project directors' meeting in Washington in December to meet with other project directors and share ideas about program success and evaluation.

Dissemination

In the last quarter of 1991, Bernhardt and Meyer will attend several regional and national conferences where they will discuss and promote Workplace Literacy. In addition , they are working on articles for a number of journals and magazines to promote workplace literacy and inform interested parties about our program.

Attachment #1:

Step *Ahead*: **Summary of Instruction Provided Through August 31, 1991**

	For the period from Jan. 1 - Aug. 31, 1991	Cumulative total for the grant
Short Courses		
Number of students	98	210
Hours of Instruction	673	1470
Literacy Workshops		
Number of Students	15	16
Hours of Instruction	219	229
Total Step Ahead		
Number of Students	113	226
Hours of Instruction	892	1699

Attachment #2: MMC Support Jan-Jun 1991

2nd Quarter Figures for Step Ahead, January through June

Cost	Write Stuff March	Cmm skls Supv. 1	Cmm skls Supv. 2	Straight Talk Mar.	Straight Talk April	Straight Talk June	Totals
Number of Students	7	23	18	8	10	7	56
Catering	$367.88	$367.88	$367.88	$367.88	$367.88	$367.88	$1471.52
Employee Paid time *	$526.50	$1296.00	$1039.50	$702.00	$769.50	$769.50	$3564.00
Room Space@$50.00/Hr.	$500.00	$450.00	$450.00	$600.00	$600.00	$600.00	$2000.00
MMC Admin. Cost	-	-	-	-	-	-	$5400.00
Avg. Cost Employee	$199.20	$91.91	$103.19	$208.74	$173.74	$248.20	$222.06
						Total	$12657.58
						Avg. per perso	$226.03

*Calculated with an averaged scale of $9.00 hr. constant

Ethnic Background	Write Stuff March	Cmm skls Supv. 1	Cmm skls Supv. 2	Straight Talk Mar.	Straight Talk April	Straight Talk June	Totals	%
Anglo	2	9	11	4	4	4	26	46%
Hispanic	4	10	5	4	6	6	23	41%
Afro American	1	4	1	0	0	0	6	11%
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2%

	Write Stuff March	Cmm skls Supv. 1	Cmm skls Supv. 2	Straight Talk Mar.	Straight Talk April	Straight Talk June	Totals
Number of Students	7	23	18	8	10	10	56
Total Hours Available	84.00	207.00	162.00	96.00	120.00	84.00	549.00
Total Hours Attended	58.50	144.00	115.50	78.00	85.50	85.50	396.00
Percentage	70%	70%	71%	81%	71%	102%	72%

Divided by Cost/Ethnic Background/Actual Hours Delivered

Prepared by Carter Campbell, Manager
Educational Services, Memorial Medical Center
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Step ahead Report, 1st quarter/Carters HD/6/26/91

Attachment #3: Total MMC Support Through June 1991

CUMULATIVE FIGURES / STEP *AHEAD* / SINCE INCEPTION

Cost	Figures
Number of Students	154
Catering	$2,176
Employee Paid time *	$12,379
Room Space@$50.00/Hr	$4,575
MMC Admin. Cost	$10,800
Avg. Cost Employee	$194

Total Cost
$29,929

*Calculated with an averaged scale of $9.00 hr. constant

Ethnic Background	Figures	% of total
Anglo	65	42.2%
Hispanic	76	49.4%
Afro American	11	7.1%
Other	2	1.3%

Category	Totals
Number of Students	154
Total Hours Available	1550
Total Hours Attended	1193
Percentage	77%

Divided by Cost/Ethnic Background/Actual Hours Delivered

Prepared by Carter Campbell, Manager
Educational Services, Memorial Medical Center
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Attachment #4: *Medical Spanish* Evaluation

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Dr. Stephen Bernhardt
From: Anne Hutchinson
Subject: "Spanish for Healthcare Personnel"
Date: 9 May 1991

This course was held in two 8-week sessions, 90 minutes per class, twice weekly.

Registered nurses, medical office personnel, telemetry techs, a midwife, an OB-GYN physician, an EMT, insurance clerks and MMC employees formed the first class. A member of the hospital board attended as well. Seventeen participants were enrolled when the course started in January; there are currently 7 in the class. Approximately five or six dropped. Some cited the burden of other commitments; an RN found her graduate course load would preclude her continuing; a MMC telemetry tech was unable to attend due to a shift change. Two or three others found that occasional absences caused them to be too far behind, and they did not attend for the last two or three weeks before the March semester break.

Although the text was simplified and class work devoid of formal language concepts, the consensus was the material was new and quite challenging. There were, however, positive comments overall about the language exposure, with students stating there had been definite enhancement in the caregiver/patient relationship: "It really felt good to form a sort of bond with my patients."; "When she heard me speak Spanish, she started to talk too fast, but we finally got to communicate."; "If you don't have to worry about all those endings, it's not too bad."

Responding to apparent intimidation on the part of the students, I tried to use the simplest command forms and only 3 straightforward tenses to express past, present, and future. The high number of cognates helped a great deal in vocabulary building; verbs seemed the problem factor at the beginning, but subsequently improved.

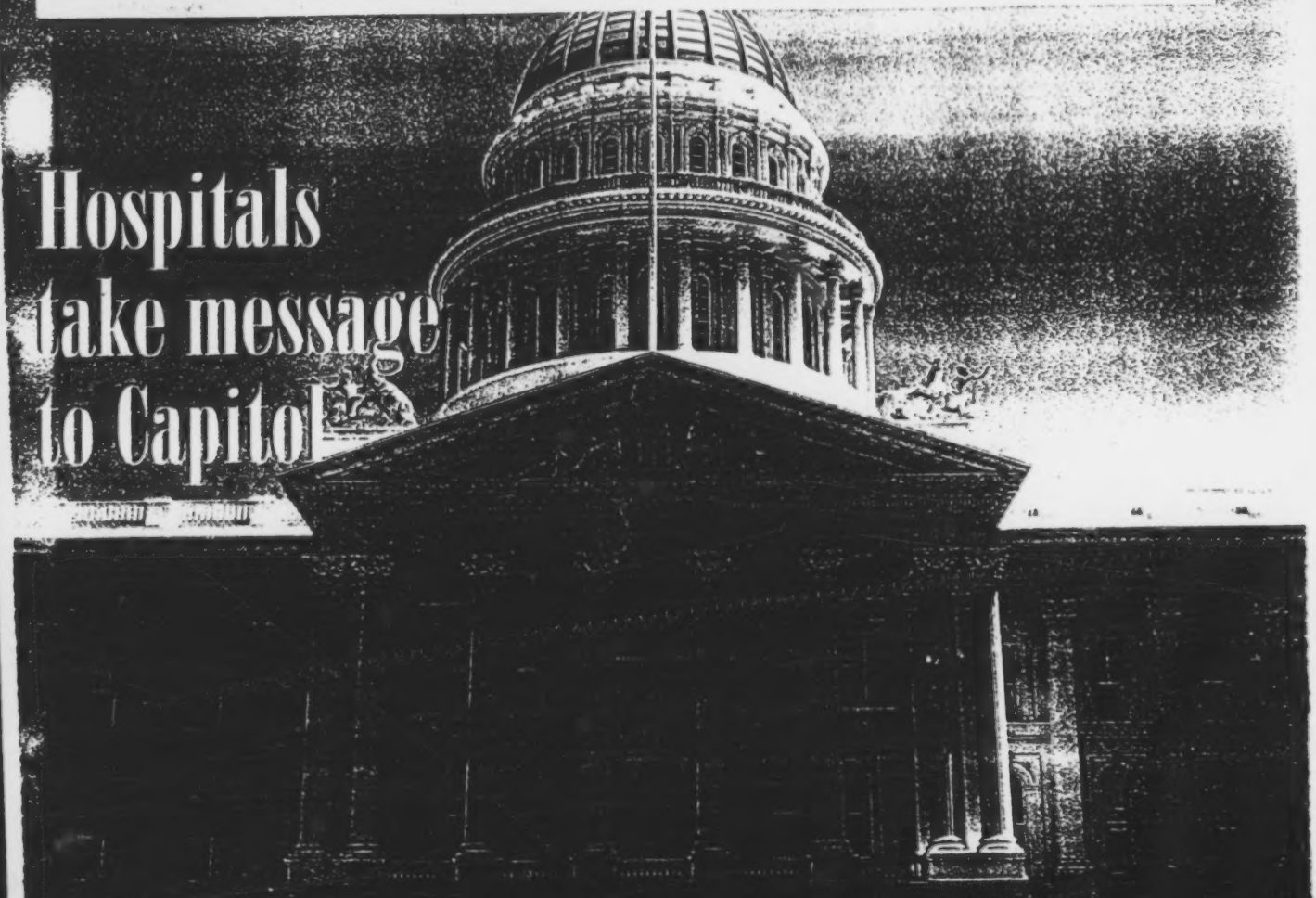
Twelve student evaluations were received after the first 8 weeks; evaluations from the session ending this evening will be solicited by the DABCC Community Education Department. The first 12 are summarized below, the ratings based on Excellent, Good, Average, and Below Average.

Overall course quality	8E	4G	
Course organization	4E	8G	
Course content	3½E	9G	
Course schedule (length/frequency)	2E	10G	
Instructor's knowledge	11E	1G	
" "enthusiasm/interest	11E	1G	
Course materials	7E	5G	
Value of course to participant	5E	4G	3A
Overall effectiveness	5E	7G	

If additional information is required, please so inform me.

Attachment #5: *California Hospitals* Story

CALIFORNIA HOSPITALS



Hospitals take message to Capitol

IN THIS ISSUE

SPECIAL FEATURE:

- **Total Quality Management**
- Cultural diversity: Los bilingues ganan la ventaja — The bilinguals have the advantage
- Californians speak out on health access: Gallup Poll results
- Boosting literacy in the workplace

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A Publication of the California Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

Pilot program designed to jump-start desire for education.

Santa Monica Medical Center to offer literacy class

UniHealth will soon be in the business of curing its literacy disorders.

Through The Service Academy at Pacific Health Resources' (PHR), the support services arm of UniHealth, support service staff will be able to improve job-related literacy skills.

"Our intent is to get a spark going," says Chris Lee who serves as director of training and education for PHR.

According to Lee, the approach is to provide vocational literacy curriculum designed to improve skills and motivate employees to seek further education through local high school adult education programs and community college classes. Employees from environmental services, food service, laundry, purchasing and bio-medical services are eligible. These departments are typically staffed by a majority of Hispanic, Latino, Black/African-American, Far East and Southeast Asian employees who have varying levels of difficulties with the English language. In addition, Los Angeles County has higher percentages of many of these groups compared to state averages. For example, 1990 Census figures show that statewide, Hispanics make up 25.8 percent of the population. But in Los Angeles County that number jumps to 37.8 percent.

"We're not trying to provide ESL 101 (English as Second Language) and then encourage them to take ESL 201. We're simply looking for some improvement in language speaking abilities," Lee adds.

Although language barriers are a prime cause of literacy problems among service-support workers, high school drop out rates are also a factor. In California, one out of five high school students is at risk for dropping out, and among major ethnic groups such as African-Americans and Hispanics, the drop out rate increases to roughly one out of three, and up to six out of 10 for Hispanics in Los Angeles County, according to one expert. Many of these young adults enter the health care work force at entry level support service jobs.

Moreover, projections to the year 2000 indicate significant growth in ethnic groups, further reinforcing the need for ongoing literacy programs. The state of California esti-

See "Service Academy" on page 25

2

■ ■ ■

Federal funds help boost literacy in New Mexico

At Memorial Medical Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico employees are learning to communicate more effectively under pressure, write better reports and increase their proficiency in English and in Spanish.

Fourteen months ago, the hospital was awarded $190,733 to develop its Step Ahead literacy program. $118,286 in federal funds were awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, National Workplace Literacy Project (see sidebar on page 25).

The Step Ahead program is a partnership between two institutions, Memorial Medical Center (MMC) in Las Cruces and the English department at New Mexico State University (NMSU).

Based on a proposal developed by Professors Stephen Bernhardt, Paul Meyer, and Dennis Picard (who serves as vice-president of human resources at MMC), the Step Ahead program is designed to meet targeted literacy needs of staff at all hospital levels. To date, six courses have been offered:

Straight Talk: designed to increase the effectiveness of oral communication during periods of high stress due to medical emergencies or staff conflict.

Write Stuff: designed to increase the effectiveness of report and other short document writing.

Communication for Supervisors: designed to help supervisors conduct better meetings, evaluate employee performance and improve oral and written English language skills.

English Skills Workshop: designed to provide one-on-one English language tutoring to improve pronunciation, grammar usage and correctness, vocabulary and telephone skills.

Medical Spanish: designed to improve hospital employees' ability to communicate with Spanish-speaking patients and their families.

Literacy Tutoring: designed to provide one-on-one literacy tutoring to hospital employees who are in the process of learning English.

Employee-students attend Step Ahead courses during their work hours. Most classes last an hour and a half and meet twice a week for four weeks. Enrollment varies from 10 to 25 students for most courses with participation levels averaging 80 percent.

The hospital pays for employees to par-

See "Step Ahead" on page 25

Step ahead

Continued from page 23

ticipate in classes and provides child-care funds and car fare for literacy tutoring at Doña Ana Branch Community College.

MMC's Department of Education measures the success of the program through participation levels and course evaluations, and through anecdotal evidence.

As of April of this year, with two quarters of instruction completed, 10 percent of the MMC organization, roughly one-third of the 250-300 trainees targeted, has participated in the Step Ahead program. For Write Stuff and Straight Talk classes held August through December, 1990, 55 percent of the students were Hispanic, 40 percent were Anglo-Saxon and 5 percent were African/American.

Course evaluations for Write Stuff and Straight Talk were consistently rated excellent and good. Negative criticism focused on the length of the class which runs for only four weeks.

Many Step Ahead students complete more than one course, indicating to course developers that the advantages of education to job proficiency and career development are becoming clear to students.

Adult Basic English, vocational ESL (English as a Second Language) and literacy tutoring have had the slowest enrollment. Publicity about these courses is conducted through flyers and special meetings with the staffs of targeted departments such as food service, environmental service, maintenance and laundry.

Picard thinks that trust levels need to be built up between program authorities and prospective students about the program's intent. "They need to see that it's not a way to discover the breadth and depth of the deficiency and use it against them," he says.

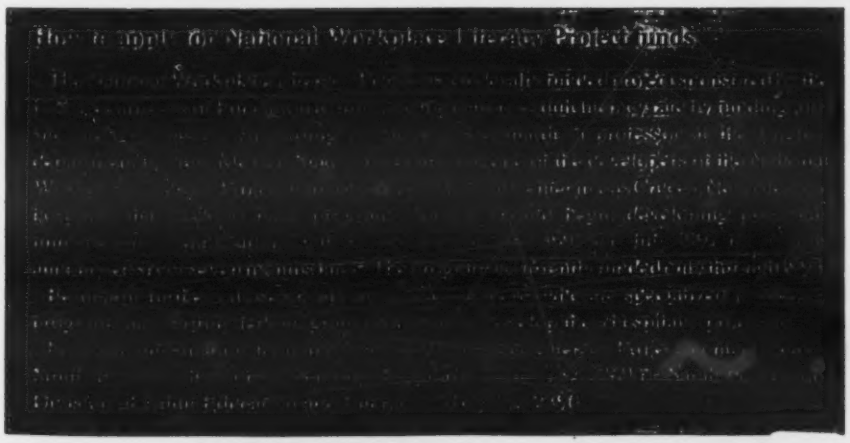
Course developers cite word-of-mouth acceptance as a factor which enhances participation.

The Step Ahead program is a partnership between two institutions, Memorial Medical Center in Las Cruces and the English department at New Mexico State University.

The effects of a comprehensive literacy program such as Step Ahead take place on many fronts. Employees advance in their work, such as one clerical worker in the physical therapy department who has recently been given the added responsibility of writing departmental correspondence. Perhaps one of the more interesting results is a diminishing of organizational fragmentation which takes place when employees from throughout the hospital attend class together.

As of December 1990, Step Ahead cost an average of $138.49 per student. Cost factors include catering, employee paid time, room space and program administration. One thousand course hours have been delivered to 97 students.

The grant period for Step Ahead is from May 15, 1990 through November 15, 1991. Bernhardt says that an extra six months of funding is available and will be sought. ■



Service Academy

Continued from page 23

mates that the Hispanic population will swell to over 9.6 million from just over 7 million in 1990.

For curriculum developers, the issue may not be whether to offer vocational literacy classes, but what curriculum model will best serve these employees.

PHR has decided that classes will be designed in one-hour sessions once or twice a week for approximately 16 weeks. Classes will be scheduled during normal working hours. UniHealth will pay employees for the time they spend in class.

According to Lee, this program design allows departments to easily plan for employee absences and find ways to cover their work.

The first round of curriculum will be funded by UniHealth, rather than with state Department of Education monies, although state funds are available for workplace literacy programs.

But Lee says that research with local school districts shows that funding guidelines are directly tied to enrollment. PHR does not want to cancel a class should enrollment fall below required minimums. In addition, PHR has chosen to avoid aggravations caused by fiscal cycles and variations in guideline interpretations district-to-district. The UniHealth system spans three school districts.

The cost of contracting with a teacher for the course is $2,500, which Lee says department directors easily justify against a total support services budget of $5 million.

In contrast to the typical recruiting deficits facing hospitals, support service directors find that teachers are eager to participate in workplace literacy programs.

Santa Monica Medical Center will be the first of the UniHealth hospitals to offer the curriculum. Classes will be scheduled for August or September, two afternoons a week. Since each class lasts just over an hour, this schedule will allow the hospital to offer the class to two shifts of environmental services and food services employees.

The literacy program is an extension of ongoing job-enrichment programs available to UniHealth staff. Lee says the benefits of job enrichment and education programs are measurable. In support staff positions, he says, turnover is typically 20 to 25 percent. He has seen that figure drop to as low as 12 percent in other institutions which offer career development programs to support staff. ■

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Attachment #6: Evaluation Report of Susie Sonflieth

NEW MEXICO COALITION FOR LITERACY

To: Ms. Nancy Smith Brooks, Program Officer
National Workplace Literacy Program
From: Susie Sonflieth, Executive Director
New Mexico Coalition for Literacy
Date: May 30, 1991
Re: On-site evaluation - Project Step Ahead, Las Cruces, NM;
Conducted April 10-11, 1991

The following evaluation of the Project Step Ahead workplace literacy project includes comments, suggestions and observations made during my two day site visit to the project in April, 1991. I appreciate the comprehensive itinerary afforded to me during my visit to Memorial Medical Center, the project site.

My comments address the selection criteria outlined in the DOE Project Application for workplace literacy projects.

(a) Program Factors

This project demonstrates a strong relationship between the skills taught and the identified needs of participants in relation to the skills development needed to meet particular job requirements in the hospital setting. It is evident from the well developed curriculum that considerable effort went into producing the student materials for the modular classes. Incorporating real hospital situations and examples in the materials makes the classes intimately work related. In one final class session I attended, during which students were asked what they had liked most about the class, the students' overwhelming response was that the materials revolved around real work situations and the examples used were situations they had encountered. Both the printed materials and the instructors demonstrated a good understanding of the hospital as a workplace with special demands on the employee.

The 'community building' process in the classes was most impressive. Students are able to share their insight into and any frustrations arising from their department's operations. Interaction between various levels and types of employees is made possible and employees are able to help each other in the classroom exercises. This new interaction among employees promotes improved productivity and individual job satisfaction, an outcome initially unanticipated by project and hospital staff who now acknowledge the importance of this 'community building and learning process'.

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All partners to the project have demonstrated strong support for project development, especially in providing the flexibility to meet student needs and staff training requests. For example, in response to staff identified needs the project began to offer Spanish classes for English speaking hospital staff as well as a class on how to organize and make presentations.

An under utilized support service offered by the project was compensation for child care services during non-working hours. This should be studied and perhaps offered to the employees in a different way as this was identified as both a motivational tool and a service needed by employees.

(b) Extent of Need for the Project

A computerized tracking system was designed by the hospital for each student. This will give baseline information as well as progress updates and results such as promotion or the attainment of further education outside the program. My observation and review of the makeup of the classes by ethnicity and gender indicated that the project was on target with respect to projections of the population to be served.

(c) Quality of Training

The curriculum materials were well designed and reflected the needs of the workplace. Individual needs were identified and addressed for lower skilled workers and those for whom English is a second language through small group tutoring sessions and one to one tutoring. The hospital classrooms were pleasant and conducive to adult learning. The incentive of serving refreshments and/or lunch is a nice perquisite and helped to create a relaxed atmosphere. I felt the team teaching approach employed in the classes was an excellent means of enhancing interaction between teachers and students and among the students themselves.

(d) Plan of Operation

The original plan of action anticipated most scenarios which arose during the project period. Flexibility was an important component of the plan and the creation of the English Skills Workshop using small group tutoring methods is a successful example.

The one unanticipated weakness of the project was the referral of students who required more intensive one to one tutoring to the local community college across town. Either the students did not feel comfortable going to the campus, or lost interest after they

left the workplace. My suggestion is to incorporate an on-site peer to peer tutoring program in the hospital project. The administration will offer volunteer tutors time off for their participation, suggesting that this approach would be successful. If the local program cannot provide a tutor training session on-site, the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy will underwrite a training session by a certified tutor trainer as part of the Coalition's in-kind support for the project.

(e) Quality of Key Personnel

Both Bernhardt and Meyer have demonstrated excellent skills in the planning and execution of this project. The hospital education and administrative staff have shown great support and interest in the project and its measurable outcomes. The classroom instructors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and showed genuine interest in the students as individuals.

(f) Evaluation Plan

I observed a first and last meeting of the modular classes. Students were asked in both classes to complete a needs assessment survey relative to what they wanted from the class, and whether or not they got what they needed. Responses were informative for class planning and the students expressed positive remarks about the classes meeting their needs.

(g) Budget and Cost Effectiveness

During my visit I was mainly concerned with the Project expenditures tied to the sub-grant awarded by the Coalition for Literacy. There was an underexpenditure of the sub-grant due mainly to a delay in the sub-grant award process and the lack of participation in the one to one tutoring program. Budget revisions were made to satisfy sub-grant requirements.

Project Step Ahead is a successful project and what we have learned from it may be applied to hospitals across our state in designing effective workplace literacy programs. I look forward to the expansion of this project to other communities.

cc: Dr. Stephen Bernhardt, Project Step Ahead

Progress Report:
Step *Ahead*:
A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

Compiled by Paul R. Meyer and Stephen A. Bernhardt
as part of the
Workplace Literacy Partnership

Las Cruces, NM
April 1, 1991

This progress report details the period January1-March 31 for Step *Ahead,* a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project (Project #V198A00163), a partnership between the English Department of New Mexico State University and Memorial Medical Center.

Progress in Meeting Project Goals

Participation Goals

This quarter was a period of redesigning course materials from our existing short courses and developing new instructional materials for a course in Communication for Supervisors. Because of a space crunch at the Medical Center's classrooms, we had to wait until mid-March to start new courses. They are running now with decent enrollments. Since we had the time, we significantly revised our materials so they could be distributed to other hospitals or workplace literacy projects and be useful outside our own context.

We are meeting our goals for working individually with hospital employees to revise commonly used hospital documents to resolve problems of comprehension and job performance.

We have made progress in our goals to involve staff in one-to-one literacy tutoring. We have had increasing response to our recruiting efforts: flyers, talking with managers and supervisors, asking course participants to speak with their friends at work, and meeting directly with working groups likely to have members with low literacy skills (cafeteria, laundry, maintenance, housekeeping). Several workers are currently being tested for reading level in preparation for assignment to Literacy Volunteer tutor. We are also working individually with several employees in our English Skills Workshops sessions (see below).

Project Activities

Short Courses

One of our primary activities is a series of short, modular courses in communication skills directly related to the communication demands of health care workers. We currently have two sections of Straight Talk running (one with ten students and one with fourteen) and a class in the Write Stuff (with ten students). We will continue to offer these courses at various times until demand slackens. We have reached well over 10% of the hospital staff of some 1100 employees.

Next week a class in Communication for Supervisors will be offered for the first time. Response has been tremendous. With very little advertising, we have twenty-six people signed up, representing a wide cross-section of the hospital. Some are low-level, front line supervisors who have responsibility for a few other workers; some are somewhat higher level supervisors or patient care coordinators. We see this training as an important aspect of workplace literacy, one with direct consequences on the job advancement potential of participants. We believe that those who participate in this course in supervisory communication will be more supportive and better able to develop the potential of the workers under them. We recognize we are working at fairly high levels of literacy /communication training, but we think it is important to work across the organization to develop a climate that fosters growth in literacy skills.We would also note that some of the participants who signed up are joining their third course from Step *Ahead*, which we view as an indication of the value of the courses.

English Skills Workshop
The English Skills Workshop meets twice each week for two hours each session. It has a small (3-5) but devoted group of participants reflecting different skill levels who work on ESL, pronunciation, grammar usage and correctness, vocabulary, and telephone skills. We believe this is an effective way to deliver instruction that can best be taught one-on-one in individualized or collaborative ways. Two instructors--one funded by the English Department's matching funds and one by the Coalition--work in flexible ways with the small group. This workshop has helped identify individuals in need of one-on-one literacy tutoring.

Document Revision and Development
We continue to work alongside individuals who need to learn how to write and revise frequently used hospital documentation. One current effort involves working with the Lab to write procedures for using the new computer databases for coding all specimens. The hospital employees do all the writing; Step *Ahead* offers advice periodically to help the employees feel comfortable and productive in this new, highly specialized sort of workplace literacy--writing instructions for people who must learn to use computers.

Activities Being Planned

Short Courses
We are planning additional short courses, to begin during the summer of 1991.

Incident and Problem Reports
- Understanding the organizational and legal functions of these specialized documents
- Writing clear, effective incident and problem reports
- Distinguishing narration from exposition; generalization from support

(We have been doing a lot of on-site research and interviewing to prepare for this course. Once we have some agreement among key supervisory personnel, we will plan a short course that will try to create some consistency within this type of writing. These documents are critical to the hospital--they are written frequently and used for safety and legal purposes.)

Making Oral Presentations
- collecting and organizing information for presentations
- preparing visuals and handouts
- communicating with a present audience
- speaking with good clarity, phrasing, grammar

Liaison with Dona Ana Branch Community College (DABCC)

Literacy Tutoring

We are encouraging those employees needing basic literacy tutoring to get personalized one-on-one tutoring from the Dona Ana Branch Community College Literacy Volunteers. We currently have five individuals (whom we know of--there may be others who made contacts on their own) who are arranging to work with tutors. As we continue to solidify our presence in the hospital, we will convince other employees to talk with us about opportunities for tutoring. We are working with the Hospital to provide a convenient procedure for disbursing funds for child care and carfare.

Medical Spanish

A non-credit community college course in Medical Spanish is being taught on-site during spring 1991. The sections have good enrollments (approximately 20 in each). The two eight-week sessions cover medical terminology, phrasing, and interview strategies for patient communication. We have helped this effort by providing some materials to class members. This on-site course is one of our responses to persistent complaints from staff that more hospital staff need to be bilingual. The need to be literate in two languages to be an effective hospital worker is an interesting complication in our project.

Liaison with Nursing Program at NMSU

In cooperation with the nursing program, we are teaching a special section of English 318: Advanced Technical and Professional Communication to be taught at MMC for those LPNs and RNs pursuing their B.S. or for other hospital employees who need advanced technical writing skills. The English Department is staffing the course out of commitment to the Step *Ahead* project. Under its standard policy for employees (not out of grant funds or matching funds), the hospital is providing reimbursement to employees for tuition and books.

Publicity

We were thrilled to work with ABC News/New York to produce a 30-second and a one minute public service announcement describing our project under their Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) series. We filmed during mid-March and expect to see the story broadcast nationally during April and May. We will be sure to provide the Coalition for Literacy and the U.S. Department of Education with copies of the tape. It was exciting for us and for the participants in Step *Ahead*. It was very gratifying to hear the employees share their enthusiasm for the project. We received substantail media coverage from the local TV news networks, who did a "story on the story" and included good publicity about our project.

Dr. Bernhardt participated in a local panel discussion on workplace literacy in Albuquerque following a national teleconference. He discussed our project and encouraged others to adopt similar strategies for workplace literacy (see attached letter from Susie Sonflieth, local organizer of the teleconference/panel session).

The major part of our hospital-wide publicity has been by word of mouth as a result of our class participants. We continue to write regular pieces for the *Forum*, the monthly hospital newsletter. In addition, we have placed English and Spanish-language posters around the hospital and translated some of our flyers into Spanish.

Progress Report:
Step *Ahead*:
A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

Compiled by Stephen A. Bernhardt and Paul R. Meyer
as part of the
Workplace Literacy Partnership

Las Cruces, NM
December 31, 1990

This progress report details the period August 15-December 31 for Step *Ahead,* a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project (Project #V198A00163), a partnership between the English Department of New Mexico State University and Memorial Medical Center.

Progress in Meeting Project Goals

Participation Goals

We are pleased with what we have accomplished in the first four and half months of our project. We have established a good rapport with the hospital community and are getting a lot of positive feedback about our project.

We are ahead of our goals for participation in short courses that focus on literacy skills necessary for successful job performance and advancement. The data reflects broad participation by working groups across the hospital. To date, 97 of the hospital staff have attended 797 hours of instruction. See below and Attachment #1 and #2. Sixty-one percent of the participants have been ethnic minorities (See Attachment #3), and most participants have been from the middle to lower echelons of the hospital.

We are meeting our goals for working individually with hospital employees to revise commonly used hospital documents to resolve problems of comprehension and job performance. See below **Revising Hospital Documents.** Our estimate of the time spent in these activities thus far is detailed on Attachment #4.

We are behind in our goals to involve staff in one-to-one literacy tutoring. We have provided 10 hours of one-on-one ESL instruction for one hospital employee who was in danger of losing his job because of weak English writing skills. He is now doing well. During the first months of our project, we simply have not had a demand for one-on-one literacy tutoring, despite publicity and recruiting efforts which included circulating flyers, talking with managers and supervisors, and asking course participants to speak with their friends at work.

In order to make sure that we reach workers who need more basic ESL or literacy instruction, Step *Ahead* and representatives of the Dona Ana Branch Community College (DABCC is our helping organization) met, in December, with working groups likely to have members with low literacy skills (cafeteria, laundry, maintenance, housekeeping).

Those meetings went very well. A number of those present requested more information about basic English, ESL, or vocational education courses offered by DABCC. Because workers can take advantage of DABCC offerings (and especially its literacy tutoring) anonymously, we will not know how many hospital employees respond to this recruitment effort. In an additional effort to reach this same group, Step *Ahead* is sponsoring a **Learning Fair** in January (see below).

Project Activities

Matching Funds
During the period, we received notice that our application for matching funds from the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy had been awarded ($12,400). These funds provide for additional materials, publicity, dissemination, evaluation, and child care for participants.

The hospital's support of the project has exceeded our initial estimates. Hospital administration and management have both worked to make Step *Ahead* a success. To date, the hospital's matching contribution for Step *Ahead* classes is estimated at $13, 433.68 (Attachment #5). Note: This amount does not include estimates of general planning and administrative time contributed by Carter Campbell and Dennis Picard.

Short Courses
One of our primary activities is a series of short, modular courses in communication skills directly related to the communication demands of health care workers. We developed and taught two such courses during this period:

Straight Talk:
- projecting courtesy and an appropriate hospital ethos
- problem solving (HELP MODEL)
- listening skills
- urgent situations, working with tense or angry individuals
- phone communication
- handling stress

The Write Stuff: Memos and Short Reports
- planning, drafting, revising and editing short written texts
- writing with a clear sense of purpose and audience
- writing hospital narratives
- controlling grammar and style for clear expression

Each of these courses meets twice per week for an hour and a half for four weeks. All class time is on the clock; refreshments or lunch is served at each meeting. Summary data are appended to this report on total attendance and areas of the hospital that have participated. We will continue to offer these courses regularly until demand slackens.

As part of our formative assessment, we have been evaluating and revising the courses as we offer them. An evaluation summary is included at the end of this report (See Attachment #6). Both courses have been well attended and highly praised. We are seeing a cross section of hospital employees, including some supervisors and managers as well as staff. Some hospital units have very well represented: patient accounts is sending their entire staff to both courses; pharmacy has indicated its intention to do the same.

Activities Being Planned

Short Courses
We are planning additional short courses, to begin in January and February of 1991.

Communication for Supervisors and Managers
- evaluating employees
- governing behavior orally and in writing, giving orders
- writing and explaining policies and procedures
- improving oral and written English language skills
- writing letters outside the department and outside the hospital
- participating in and conducting meetings

Despite its title, which is designed to emphasize professional development, this course is geared to the lowest supervisory level in the hospital and its target audience includes non-supervisors who would like to move up into supervisory positions. For this group, better communication skills--reading, writing, speaking, and listening--are the primary obstacle to upward mobility.

Vocational ESL
We have planned and advertised a vocational ESL course to meet four hours per week for fourteen weeks. We have been conducting special meetings with the staff in the cafeteria, the laundry, maintenance, and housekeeping to encourage enrollment, as these seem to be the places in the hospital with staff who would benefit from such a course.

Incident and Problem Reports
- Understanding the organizational and legal functions of these specialized documents
- Writing clear, effective incident and problem reports
- Distinguishing narration from exposition; generalization from support

Making Oral Presentations
- collecting and organizing information for presentations
- preparing visuals and handouts
- communicating with a present audience
- speaking with good clarity, phrasing, and grammar

Revising Hospital Documents
In this workshop, hospital staff revise in-house and patient-information documents in their areas to make them more readable and easier to use. They learn general principles for simplifying language, communicating clearly, and designing effective pages.

Grammar Workshop
We are planning a grammar workshop in response to requests from employees. This will be an opportunity for employees to bring their writing to a workshop setting so they can get feedback and individualized instruction on how to improve their grammar usage and correctness. We believe this will be an effective way to deliver instruction that can best be taught one-on-one in individualized ways.

Liaison with Dona Ana Branch Community College (DABCC)

Literacy Tutoring

We are working to become known across the hospital and to use our network to reach those employees most in need of literacy tutoring. We are encouraging those needing basic literacy tutoring to get personalized one-on-one tutoring from the Dona Ana Branch Community College Literacy Volunteers. As we continue to solidify our presence in the hospital, we will convince other employees to talk with us about opportunities for tutoring.

Medical Spanish

We are bringing a non-credit community college course on-site during spring 1991. The two eight-week sessions will cover medical terminology, phrasing, and interview strategies for patient communication. This is one of our reponses to persistant complaints from staff that more hospital staff need to be bilingual. The need to be literate in two languages to be an effective hospital worker is an interesting complication in our project. At this date, 18 people are already enrolled for the course.

Liaison with Nursing Program at NMSU

In cooperation with the nursing program, we are planning a special section of English 318: Advanced Technical and Professional Communication to be taught at MMC for those LPNs and RNs pursuing their B.S. or for other hospital employees who need advance technical writing skills. The course will use materials from MMC and a textbook that focuses on nursing communication. It is scheduled to begin in January 1991. The English Department is staffing the course out of commitment to the Step *Ahead* project and the hospital is providing reimbursement to employees for tuition and books.

We are promoting a second credit course from NMSU: Spanish for the Helping Professions. We are encouraging employees to enroll in the special section on medical communication.

Learning Fair

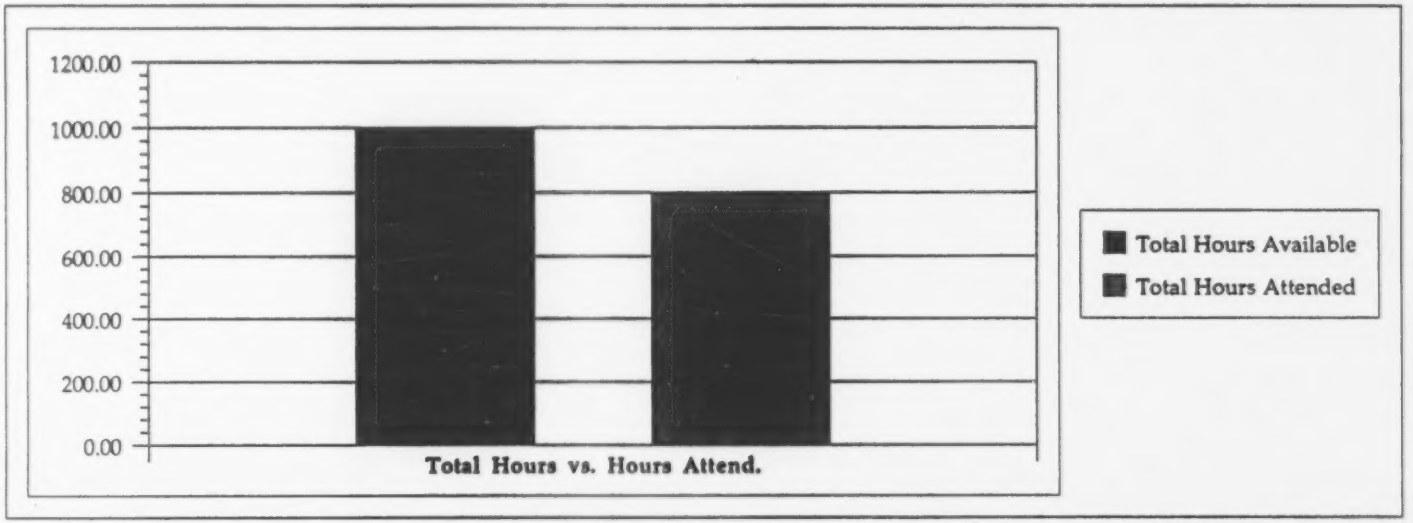
We are planning a Learning Fair for late January. Step *Ahead* and Memorial Medical Center want to make it as easy as possible for hospital employees to take advantage of educational opportunities that could result in personal growth or improve their opportunities for advancement. The Learning Fair is an idea that Dennis Picard, the V.P. for Human Resources, brought back from his trip to the Literacy Conference of the American Hospital Association in Washington, D. C. in October (paid in part by project funds). We will set up booths and have representives from the hospital's Educational Services, Human Resources, Step *Ahead*, the Community Colleges, the Literacy Volunteers, the Nursing Program, and technical/vocational education.

Publicity

The major part of our hospital-wide publicity has been by word of mouth as a result of our class participants. We have been writing regular pieces for the *Forum*, the monthly hospital newsletter. In addition, we have placed English and Spanish-language posters around the hospital and translated some of our flyers into Spanish.

1st Quarter Figures for Step Ahead, August through December, 1990

Total Hours vs. Hours Attend	Write Stuff Sept.	Write Stuff Nov.	Straight talk, Sept	Straight Talk Oct.	Straight Talk Nov.	Totals
Number Enrolled	18	20	18	16	25	97
Total Hours Available	180.00	210.00	180.00	168.00	262.50	1000.50
Total Hours Attended	138.75	142.50	143.75	157.50	214.50	797.00
Percentage	77%	68%	80%	94%	82%	80%



Total Hours Instruction Time
vs.
Hours Attended

Prepared by Carter Campbell, Manager
Educational Services, Memorial Medical Center
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Step ahead 1st quarter atten./Carters HD/12/20/90

Attachment #2: Instructional Time, Cost and Ethnic Breakdown

1st Quarter Figures for Step Ahead, August through December, 1990

Cost	Write Stuff Sept.	Write Stuff Nov.	Straight talk, Sept	Straight Talk Oct.	Straight Talk Nov.	Totals
Number of Students	18	20	18	16	25	97
Catering	$89.90	$105.90	$89.90	$312.60	$105.90	$704.20
Employee Paid time	$1299.37	$2059.48	$1641.09	$1706.04	$2108.62	$8814.60
Room Space@$50.00/Hr.	$500.00	$525.00	$500.00	$525.00	$525.00	$2575.00
MMC Admin. Cost	$223.20	$248.00	$223.20	$198.40	$310.00	$1202.80
Avg. Cost Employee	$117.36	$146.92	$136.34	$171.38	$121.98	$137.08
					Total	$13433.68
					Avg. per person	$138.49

Ethnic Background	Write Stuff Sept.	Write Stuff Nov.	Straight talk, Sept	Straight Talk Oct.	Straight Talk Nov.	Totals	
Anglo	8	9	5	4	13	39	40%
Hispanic	8	10	12	11	12	53	55%
Afro American	3	1	0	1	0	5	5%
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1	1%
	Write Stuff Sept.	Write Stuff Nov.	Straight talk, Sept	Straight Talk Oct.	Straight Talk Nov.	Totals	
Number of Students	18	20	18	16	25	97	
Total Hours Available	180.00	210.00	180.00	168.00	262.50	1000.50	
Total Hours Attended	138.75	142.50	143.75	157.50	214.50	797.00	
Percentage	77%	68%	80%	94%	82%	80%	

Divided by Cost/Ethnic Background/Actual Hours Delivered

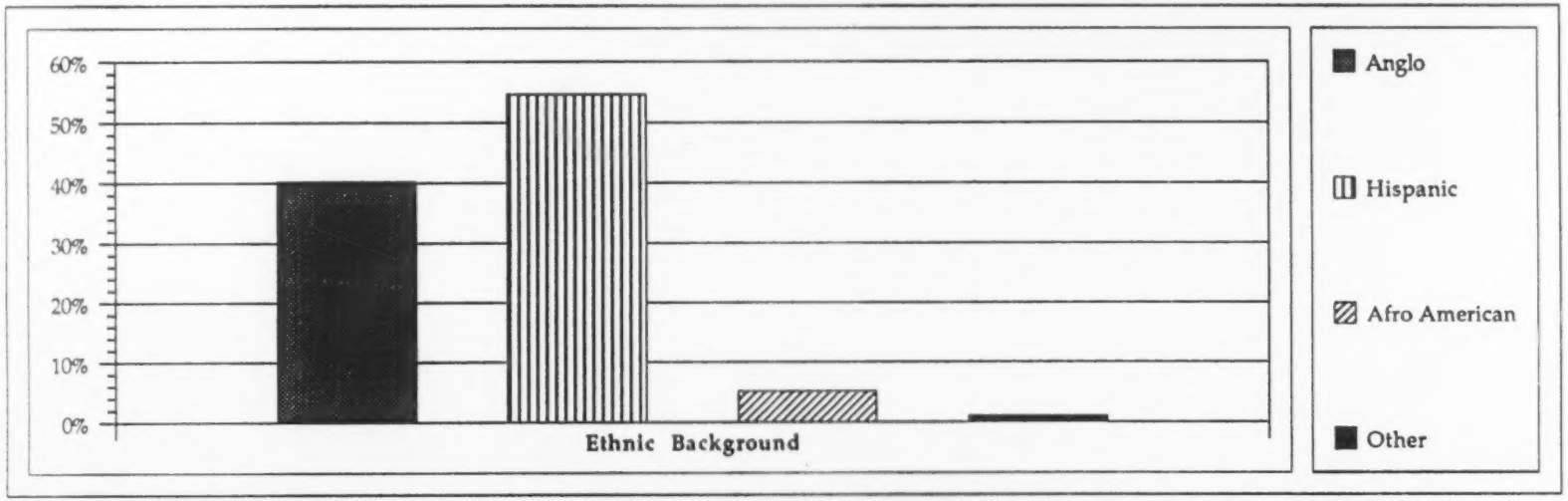
Step ahead Report, 1st quarter/Carters HD/12/20/90

Prepared by Carter Campbell, Manager
Educational Services, Memorial Medical Center
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Attachment #3: Ethnic Breakdown

1st Quarter Figures for Step Ahead, August through December, 1990

Ethnic Background	Write Stuff Sept.	Write Stuff Nov.	Straight Talk, Sept.	Straight Talk, Oct.	Straight Talk, Nov.	Totals	Percent
Anglo	8	9	5	4	13	39	40%
Hispanic	8	10	12	11	12	53	55%
Afro American	3	1	0	1	0	5	5%
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1	1%



Ethnic Background

Prepared by Carter Campbell, Manager
Educational Services, Memorial Medical Center
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Step ahead Report, 1st quarter/Ethnic Background/Carters HD/12/20/90

Attachment #4: Document Revision and Individualized Instruction

Document Revision

We are adopting a team approach to document revision, with staff from the hospital selecting projects they want to work on and with Step *Ahead* personnel offering advice, support, and training in redesigning the documents. The following documents have been worked on so far:

Revision Project	Step *Ahead* Staff Hours	MMC Employee Time
C.A.R.E. doctor checklists and patient information sheets	10	10
Ambulatory Surgery Unit brochure	15	5
Patient information cards for lab	2	2
Risk Management Data Sheet	12	15
Welcome card for housekeeping	2	2
Annual safety report	10	15
TOTAL	51	49

Individualized Instruction and Literacy Audits

Individualized instruction will generally be offered through our helping agency, the Doña Ana Branch Community College. We are working on a plan to estimate how many hospital employees take advantage of literacy tutoring and ABE instruction as a result of our activities, but do not yet have an accounting mechanism in place. Workers have not asked for personalized literacy audits from us, but Step *Ahead* personnel have done 10 hours of intensive ESL tutoring with one Memorial Medical Center employee at the request of his supervisor.

1st Quarter Figures for Step Ahead, August through December, 1990

Cost	Write Stuff Sept.	Write Stuff Nov.	Straight talk, Sept	Straight Talk Oct.	Straight Talk Nov.	Totals
Number of Students	18	20	18	16	25	97
Catering	$89.90	$105.90	$89.90	$312.60	$105.90	$704.20
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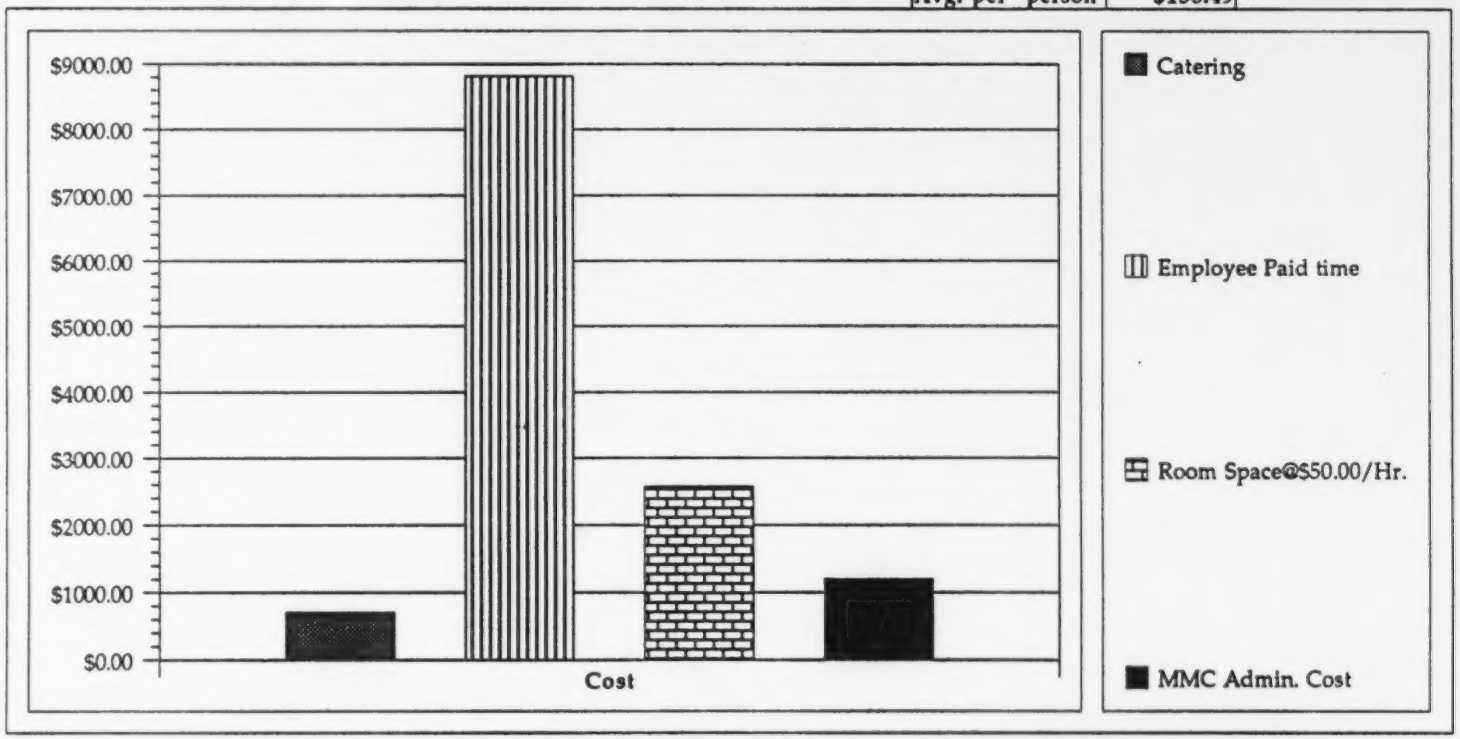

Step ahead Cost Graph/Carters HD/12/19/90

Cost

Prepared by Carter Campbell, Manager
Educational Services, Memorial Medical Center
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Attachment #6: Evaluation Activities

As part of our ongoing evaluation of the project, we have been collecting three different types of evaluation materials for each of our courses:

- course-specific pre-post tests of student proficiency
- instructor evaluation of student progress
- general course evaluations administered at the end of the courses (using the hospital's standard form)

In addtion, we meet as a group and review course materials after each course.

Step Ahead courses have received much higher evaluations than average, according to the manager of Educational Services, Carter Campbell. The following summary covers the first five courses that have been offered--three sections of Straight Talk and two sections of The Write Stuff.

Straight Talk Session 1

Eighteen (18) students attended all or part of the class. 75% improved from pre-test to post-test. Instructors estimated that 69% of the students significantly improved their oral communication skills.

Course Evaluation Summary

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Answered questions appropriately	7	2			
Information was presented in a clear, concise manner	9				
Facilitator(s) were knowledgeable in the subject presented	9				
Maintained a friendly and helpful manner	9				
Overall evaluation of this course	9				

Positive Comments:

The instructors made the course fun and interesting.

I feel this class really helped out a lot of situations that otherwise might have been a disaster. Thanks.

Negative Comments:

The course is too short.

Straight Talk Session 2

Sixteen (16) students attended the class. 79% of the students improved from pre-test to post-test. The instructors felt that 86% of the students had significantly improved their oral communication skills.

Course Evaluation Summary

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Answered questions appropriately	8.5	3.5	1		
Information was presented in a clear, concise manner	11.5	1.5			
Facilitator(s) were knowledgeable in the subject presented	13.5	.5			
Maintained a friendly and helpful manner	13	1			
Overall evaluation of this course	11	2			

Positive Comments:

I believe everyone in the class [is] going to be able to communicate and listen to others in a better and more positive way.

When a class is given to me and I can grow from or change personally to become a better person--it is excellent. Thank you!

I was very pleased with the class and facilitators.

Negative Comments:

Sessions need to be held with more time available and longer sessions.

Straight Talk Session 3

Twenty-five (25) students attended the class. 65% of students improved from pre-test to post-test. Instructors estimated that 67% of the participants significantly improved their oral commmunication skills.

Course Evaluation Summary

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Answered questions appropriately	8	10			
Information was presented in a clear, concise manner	12	7	2		
Facilitator(s) were knowledgeable in the subject presented	14	7	1		
Maintained a friendly and helpful manner	19	2	1		
Overall evaluation of this course	9	12	1		

Positive Comments:

I liked [the role playing] because I learned different ways to cope with angry upset people.

Would like to see this offered for [my department] as a whole.

Im glad I took this course.

I learned how to communicate better. . . . [I] liked everything about the class. I would have liked a longer time for class.

Negative Comments:

This course should be on learning to communicate with patients, not looking to see whom you dont care for in your co-workers.

Too much discussion on dealing with clients.

Write Course Session 1

Nineteen (19) students attended the class. Instructors estimated that 80% of participants improved their writing skills. Course evaluations and pre-post tests are missing.

Write Course Session 2

Twenty (20) students attended the class. 79% of students improved their writing from pre-tst to post-test. Instructors estimated that 79% of the students improved in writing ability.

Course Evaluation Summary

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Answeredquestions appropriately	10	2			
Information was presented in a clear, concise manner	10	4			
Facilitator(s) were knowledgeable in the subject presented	13	1			
Maintained a friendly and helpful manner	13	1			
Overall evaluation of this course	13	1			

Positive Comments:

Gave me something to think about concerning writing that I never had thought of before.

I'll tell other co-workers about course. Very helpful to me. Thanks.

These techniques will be useful in any kinds of writing. I wish I had been taught these in college!

Excellent class with excellent faculty.

I feel more comfortable with writing. Being able to revise our own writing was very helpful.

Project Directors:
Dr. Stephen A. Bernhardt
Dr. Paul R. Meyer
New Mexico State University

Vice-president
of Human Resources
Dennis R. Picard
Educational Services
Manager
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88003

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Step *Ahead*

October 30, 1990

To interested colleagues:

The attached needs assessment documents the efforts of Step *Ahead*, a partnership for improved health care communication. The partnership between Memorial Medical Center and New Mexico State University is funded in large part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education under the National Workplace Literacy Program of 1990.

We are a demonstration project and are more than willing to share our materials and expertise. If you would like to know more about Step *Ahead*, if you would like to see our course materials or other documents, or if you would like to consult on the development of workplace literacy efforts in your organization, we would be happy to talk with you.

Needs Assessment Report: Communication at Memorial Medical Center

Las Cruces, NM
August 15, 1990

Compiled by Paul R. Meyer and Stephen A. Bernhardt
as part of the
Workplace Literacy Partnership

Step *Ahead*: A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

This report offers a needs assessment concerning staff and staff/patient communication at Memorial Medical Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico. The assessment was undertaken as part of the planning effort for a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project, funded primarily by the U. S. Department of Education (Project #V198A00163), a partnership between the English Department of New Mexico State University and Memorial Medical Center.

Executive Summary

On the basis of our needs assessment, we recommend:

- developing and teaching **a series of short, modular courses** in work related communication skills. These will include courses in oral communication, interpersonal communication, memos and short reports, communication for supervisors and managers, on-the-job-reading, incident and problem reports, medical Spanish, making oral presentations, revising hospital documents, computer skills, and conflict resolution. We will also develop a communications module that will be part of upcoming certification courses for nursing assistants.
- working with hospital staff to **revise** patient infomation and in-house **documents** to make them more efficient and more readable. In some cases, patient information documents will be translated into Spanish.
- setting up a special, on-site **health care-related** English as a Second Language (ESL) course for hospital staff
- setting up an intervention procedure for encouraging Memorial Medical Center staff with basic ESL or basic literacy needs to enroll in regularly scheduled ESL classes or get **one-on-one tutoring** at Dona Ana Branch Community College.
- offering a special section of **English 318**: Advanced Technicial and Professional Communication on site to hospital staff (particularly nurses pursuing a B. S. in nursing). We are working with the Nursing Program at NMSU to get more courses taught on-site at times that will be convenient for hospital staff.

Information Collection Activities: What We Did

From May 15-August 15, 1990, the Step *Ahead* team collected a variety of information in an attempt to identify needs and define program goals. We based our needs assessment of Memorial Medical Center on models of communication and literacy audits found in the literature. We began with a **walkthrough** of the hospital. Then, working from an organizational chart of the hospital, we divided hospital personnel into three broad groups: support services, administrative, and patient care (which was further subdividied into a nursing and non-nursing group). We attempted to get at the needs of each of these groups in four ways: through **interviews** of selected personel, through **focus groups** of representative personnel, by **observing** hospital workers on the job, and by collecting **examples of the forms** and documents hospital staff use on a daily basis.

Interviews

During our needs assessment we conducted over forty interviews with hospital staff. In these interviews, hospital staff told us about the job-related communication they did (oral, written, face-to-face, telephone, in English, and in Spanish), the communication problems they faced on a daily basis, and the communication skills they would like to improve.

We interviewed people in all major divisions and most major subdivisions of the hospital. We interviewed people in fiscal services (information & communication systems, medical records, and patient accounts), human resources (educational services and security), professional services (food and environmental services, respiratory therapy, social services, and ambulance), patient care (ambulatory surgery, medical surgical, and maternal/child services), and support services (public relations, medical staff services, physical plant, laboratory, radiology and imaging, and supply, processing and distribution). We interviewed assistant administrators, managers, supervisors, and staff. We interviewed file clerks, accounting clerks, coders, ambulance drivers, respiratory therapists, laundry assistants, attendants, patient care coordinators, charge nurses, nurses, ward clerks, and nursing assistants.

Focus Groups

We conducted four focus groups for non-managerial personnel in support services, administrative services, and nursing-related and non-nursing-related patient care. An average of six hospital employees attended each meeting--which included a lunch catered by the hospital and paid for by the department of human resources. In the focus groups, people discussed communication issues at Memorial Medical Center and ways the Step *Ahead* program could be made to work for them. We also met with two groups of nursing assistants for similar discussions (with refreshments provided by MMC).

Observations

In areas that seemed to be good candidates for courses in job-specific communication skills, we observed hospital staff on the job. We observed staff working with documents in medical records and staff interacting with patients in patient accounts. We observed nursing shift changes, and we attended a training class for nurses in the newly adopted method of focused charting by exception.

Collection of Documents

We collected a variety of workplace documents both to help us understand the communicative demands that are placed on MMC staff and to help us develop effective workplace-related material for our modular courses. A number of managers and staff showed us copies of in-house forms or patient information materials that could be written more clearly or need to be translated into Spanish.

Perceived Needs: What We Found

As we interviewed and observed the staff at MMC, we found confidence, enthusiasm, and pride at all levels. MMC is perceived as a good place to work and one that is supportive of staff who wish to improve their skills and advance within the organization. Many staff have taken courses through Educational Services, NMSU, or Dona Ana Branch Community College, and they seem alert to possibilities for other courses that might help their careers. The staff were enthusiastic about Step *Ahead*, and they offered many suggestions for possible courses.

Needs Within the Scope of Step *Ahead*

We identified a number of communication needs which can be addressed through short, job-specific seminars or through longer-term instruction.

There are some very general concerns within the hospital about **basic writing and grammar**. These concerns are not unusual, especially in a business that relies on written records to the extent the hospital does. Specific concerns relate to **incident, first accident,** and **problem reports**--which form to use, how to fill it out, and how to provide a useful level of detail. These forms are complex in their purposes, and the perception of what they are and how they should be filled out varies among staff.

Oral communication, especially in stressful situations, is perceived as a skill that needs development. The need for courtesy and tact, even under conditions of stress, duress, tension, or anger, was mentioned repeatedly. Skills for working with clients who are hostile or frustrated were also identified often as a need. Hospital staff see a pressing need for increasing their oral communication skills in two basic areas: dealing with patients and dealing with each other.

There are some complaints about **communication among departments**, with a stress on the need to distinguish between normal needs and those that really need immediate attention (STAT in hospital language). Employees from several groups identified a general problem of other people giving orders, being bossy, and acting as though the other's current concern is the most pressing issue in the hospital. Step *Ahead* courses will stress **team building** as a way of addressing this concern.

There are frequent requests for **improved penmanship**, especially for the physicians. Penmanship can be attended to in courses in writing and basic grammar; whether we can get the attention of physicians, however, is doubtful, since they are not on the staff of the hospital. Another frequently expressed need, especially for those employees who wish to advance to supervisory positions, is **professional dress**. This issue has arisen with sufficient frequency that it should be attended to in the nonverbal communication component of the oral communication modules.

Instruction in **basic reading** (literacy tutoring) is probably needed by some, but only for a relatively small number of hospital staff in such areas as environmental services, food service, and laundry. The target audience for this kind of instruction probably overlaps with ESL. Almost all hospital staff have to be able to do some reading and writing--if only marking off checklists and reading labels. General reading skills--procedures, job manuals, policies, reference--can usefully shape the content of general instructional modules in **reading on the job**.

Some confusion is caused by **terminology**--especially between Supply, Processing, and Distribution (SPD) and the floors--when supplies are ordered from the floors. Different floors and individuals use different names for the same items. Conversely, some nurses have said that personnel in SPD don't know as much as they should about basic supplies.

There is clearly a need for a course in **medical communication in Spanish** for hospital staff who translate for patients. This training should be made work-related by focusing on the real sorts of interchanges that take place between hospital staff and their Spanish-speaking patients on a daily basis. It should go beyond the existing hospital course in medical terminology--a course that concentrates primarily on learning words through Latin and Greek roots.

There is also considerable interest in **English as a second language** (ESL) instruction for first language speakers of Spanish who would like to improve their command of written and spoken English. It was somewhat difficult to gauge the overall need for such courses. We found that many of the Spanish speakers who expressed insecurity about their English skills were both fluent and articulate in English, and we suspect that those most in need of ESL training did not come forward.

Many patient information forms need to be translated into Spanish or rewritten to make them easier to read and use. This need for **document redesign** is fairly pervasive. Hospital staff from most areas complained about forms.

Several specific needs were identified concerning patient care. MMC is interested in developing the communication skills of its large group of nursing assistants (~65), who represent a pool of potential nurses and who have (for the most part) good bilingual skills. Efforts underway involve **training and certification** for nursing assistants, including a communications component, coupled with a screening test for hiring.

Some LPNs need more preparation to pass their **RN licensure exams**, and communication skills and test-taking skills may help them. Among the whole nursing staff, there is a need to learn new methods for taking **nursing notes**. A required training session is underway.

Many nurses would benefit from the general courses in writing, oral communication, and supervisory skills that will be offered to other groups in the hospital.

Labor and Delivery and Post Partum would benefit from **video and audio cassettes** that cover such common topics as breathing/labor, sitz bath, nursing/breast feeding, bathing infants, circumcision, and consent forms. Audio tapes might work best at night. The instruction needs to be delivered as needed--for example, as soon as a mother needs to nurse.

Several groups of employees have indicated a need for **computer instruction**. The supervisor of security would like more of his officers to be able to use their new software, some clerks in Medical Records feel they would like additional training, and some nursing assistants have indicated they would like training in the various uses of computers for patient care.

Projected Activities: What We Intend to Do

We propose the following courses, documentation projects, liaison relationships, and intervention activities as a response to the needs identified in our assessment and described above. We welcome other suggestions and feedback from Memorial Medical Center about this proposed plan of action. The plan will inevitably be revised and expanded as the project continues.

Proposed Courses

One of our primary activities will be a series of short, modular courses in communication skills directly related to the communication demands of health care workers. This list summarizes our current plans (A=top priority, to be developed immediately; B= secondary, C=tertiary).

1. Oral Communication I: **A** priority.
   - projecting courtesy and an appropriate hospital ethos
   - problem solving (HELP MODEL)
   - listening skills
   - urgent situations, working with tense or angry individuals
   - phone communication

2. Oral Communication II: **B** priority.
   - normal hospital communication
   - communicating with subordinates and supervisors
   - handling stress
   - problem solving
   - participating in and conducting meetings

3. Memos and Short Reports: **A** priority.
   - planning, drafting, revising and editing short written texts
   - writing with a clear sense of purpose and audience
   - writing hospital narratives
   - controlling grammar and style for clear expression

4. Communication for Supervisors and Managers: **A** priority.
   - evaluating employees
   - governing behavior orally and in writing, giving orders
   - writing and explaining policies and procedures
   - improving oral and written English language skills
   - writing letters outside the department and outside the hospital

5. On-the-Job Reading: **A** priority.
   - improve reading and using documents in hospital settings.
   - reading and following the employee handbook, inhouse memos, evaluation reports, safety procedures.

6. Incident and Problem Reports: **A** priority.
   - Understanding the organizational and legal functions of these specialized documents
   - Writing clear, effective incident and problem reports
   - Distinguishing narration from exposition; generalization from support

7. Making Oral Presentations: **B** priority
   - collecting and organizing information for presentations
   - preparing visuals and handouts
   - communicating with a present audience
   - speaking with good clarity, phrasing, grammar

8. Medical Spanish: **B** priority
   - terminology, phrasing, interview strategies for patient communication

9. Revising Hospital Documents: **B** priority.
   - In this course, hospital staff would work on revising in-house and patient-information documents in their areas to make them more readable and easier to use.

10. Computer Skills: **B** priority.
    - We are considering on-site instruction with 2-3 students at a time to train staff in using the computers and software used by different departments, including Security , Medical Records, and SPD.

11. Conflict Resolution: **C** priority
    - negotiating, problem solving
    - consensus and team-building

Other ideas for other courses: Some interest has been expressed in training that attends to math skills, consumer skills, penmanship, stress management, time organization, office organization, document and file organization.

Document Revision

Several documents have been identified for revision and we expect to receive other requests for help.

1. **C.A.R.E. doctor checklist and patient information sheets.**
2. **Ambulatory Surgery Unit brochure with instructions and physician's orders.**
3. **Patient Information Card describing urine and stool collection procedure for Lab--to be written in both Spanish and English.**
4. **Post-surgery instructions for patients (3 versions).**
5. **Information form for parents of children having surgery.**
6. Data collection for for annual departmental reports to the Safety Committee.

Liaison with Dona Ana Branch Community College (DABCC)

Vocational ESL:

We are exploring with DABCC the possibility of a special section, preferably on-site, that would prepare hospital staff for further study at DABCC or NMSU--a sort of pre-college level, medical ESL course. We might team teach such a course or simply seek advice from the DABCC ESL coordinator on how best to teach it.

Literacy Tutoring:

We are working to become known across the hospital and to use our network to reach those employees most in need of literacy tutoring. We are encouraging those needing basic literacy tutoring to get personalized one-on-one tutoring from the Dona Ana Branch Community College Literacy Volunteers. As we continue to solidify our

presence in the hospital, we will convince other employees to talk with us about opportunities for tutoring.

Liaison with Nursing Program at NMSU

In cooperation with the nursing program, we are planning a special section of English 318: Advanced Technical and Professional Communication to be taught at MMC at a time of day that is convenient to those RNs pursuing their B.S. The course will use materials from MMC and a textbook that focuses on nursing communication. Planned for January 1991.

We are working to bring other courses on-site at MMC, to encourage enrollment of MMCers in existing programs, and generally to disseminate information about educational possibilities related to career advancement.

Publicity and Other Activities

The major part of our hospital-wide publicity has been by word of mouth and as a result of our interviews and focus groups. We included a flier about our program with employee paychecks. We described our program at the monthly meeting for hospital managers and at a similar meeting for nursing leaders. We were featured on the news broadcast of Las Cruces public television, and covered by press releases on local radio stations and in the local and state newpapers. An article about our program also appeared in the *Forum*, the monthly hospital newsletter, and we are planning a regular column to inform hospital personnel about our program. In addition, we are developing English and Spanish-language posters to place around the hospital.

Concerns Related to Success of Program

We recognize that several factors will have an important impact on the success of the program. The scheduling of courses is critical to achieving enrollment. The around-the-clock operation of the hospital means we need to be sensitive to the needs of employees on second and night shifts.

We need to work to successfully release employees for instruction during work hours. Many employees have set duties that must be completed. We will need creative solutions to the problem of covering for some employees while they attend training sessions. And wherever possible, we should try to provide particpants in workshops and short courses with continuing education credits.

We also need to continue the good working relationship we have with hospital management, especially Dennis Picard in Human Resources and Carter Campbell in Educational Services. We will need continued feedback on what is working well and what we can do make the program more responsive to workplace needs.